SPECTRUM 03

d. *fig.* The entire range or extent of something, arranged by degree, quality, etc.

1936 R. CAMPBELL *Mithraic Emblems* 20 Their sistered stridences ignite The spectrum of the poets' lyre. **1952**, etc. [see *broad-spectrum* a. s.v. BROAD D. 2]. **1958** *Listener* 28 Aug. 308/2 At the other end of the political spectrum Lloyd Warner has used similar methods in his nostalgic account of the status system of old New England. **1964** G. L. COHEN *What's Wrong with Hospitals?* i. 18 Theoretically, students remain long enough on each type of ward to give them a spectrum of experience. **1971** *Sci. Amer.* July 25/2 At the polar ends of the age spectrum—children and 'senior citizens'—the trends at the moment are following different courses. **1979** *Practical Woodworking* Mar. 42 P—— hand tools embrace a wide spectrum of products.

LITERARY AND ARTS MAGAZINE

Table of Contents

Season of Rebirth *Laurie Dudek* & **Dreams** by *Heather Franklin* 2
Morning News *Amy Thompson* 3
A Watery Grave *Megan Mianulli* & **Bittersweet** *R. Niven Armentrout* 4
Damn Science *Carly Halfter* 5
Freedom *Justin Fairley* 6
A Query for Robert Browning & **Upon Reading Leaves of Grass** *R. Niven Armentrout* 7
Flower Bud & **Points** *Kym Kunaniec* 8
A Delightful Pineapple & **Waltz with Minced Meat** *Matt Connelly* 9
ADHD *R. Niven Armentrout* & **Tradition** *Ann Sosnowski* 10
Incarcerated *Will Rode* 11
wallpaper *Justin Fairley* 12
Mad Man *Ann Sosnowski* 13
Why Boys Don't Call *Justine Trainor* & **Soup du Jour** *Justin Fairley* 14
Lunar Lady *R. Niven Armentrout* & **9/7/2002** *Tali Mindek* 15
Home & **Elephant Ear** *Tara Cofiell* 16
Jack & **Laura Lee** *Tara Cofiell* 17
Yoko Knows *Kevin Wisniewski* & **Unwanted Incidents** *Laurie Dudek* 18
Annie *Nicole Morales* 19
Some say I think too much *Eric Thanner* 20
Heated *Kevin Wisniewski* & **Tears** *R. Niven Armentrout* 21
Have a Nice Life *Brian Shea* 22
Church & **Plant** *Claire Mullineaux* 25
Reminiscing *Floria Volynskaya* & **Adhering Dance Floor** *Justin Fairley* 26
Rate Your Life *Matthew Price* 27
Trading Places *Alan Penczek* 28
Waiting *Tali Mindek* & **ENIGMA** *Suzanne Lesley* 31
Machinery *Rachel Lewis* & **Lounging** *Lindy Cody* 32
Bush *Kisha Belton* & **Flowers** *Heather Laziuck* 33
Siena *Shannon Smith* 34
Red Balloon *Antoine Silva* & **Red Balloon** *Joel Griffith* 36
Letter to a Former Friend *Ian Schroen* 37
I used to be a poet *Ann Sosnowski* 39

Season of Rebirth?

The moonlight casts shadows
across your face.
I don't recognize you.
I'm cold—night brings no warmth
darkness covers all security
and steals away my confidence.
Are spring nights always like this?
This is the season of rebirth and growth
but no signs of life
can be seen through this thick night.
You take my hand,
it may as well belong to a stranger.
Are you taking me away from the unknown?
I'm scared.
Will I be lost in this blind world forever
with nothing familiar to cling to?
Your hand brings warmth
but there is no light ahead.

Laurie Dudek

Dreams

The world has lost its initial glow,
and dwindles in the moral race.
Its function is to serve the flow,
although there is a higher grace.
Over and Over and Over again,
we search for where we first began.

To find the Place where dreams are hidden,
way up above in heaven's secret mission.

A dream is always far and away,
we run and try to catch its tail.
But it slips through our human ways;
we run and try but yet we fail.

Heather Franklin

Morning News

Another traffic jam today on 695;
another day started with the thrums of engines
and the smoke of exhaust before my eyes, clouding my vision.
Rewind. Do it again.
Shower soap and water in my eyes,
complete with flashes of electric blue on closed lids.
Wash and scrub the dirt away, knowing you will never be clean.
Fast forward. Play it now.
Standing in front of the fridge in red robe deciding on a suitable breakfast.
No more bagels, I'll have to go shopping,
and my morning coffee is already getting cold.
Stop. Refresh.
The newscaster is calling for snow again right after he
announces the news of a young woman found stabbed to death . . .
All I can think of is more snow to shovel on Thursday morning.
Pause. Fast forward.
Sitting in traffic . . . again. Too many new housing developments,
not enough road space.
What does it take to get to work on time? Wake up at 4 and beat the traffic?
Stop. Rewind it again.
Dark and quiet, warm sheets. Sound asleep and unaware of the world.
Fast forward.
Blow-drying wet hair and hoping to God it will actually lay right today.
Fast forward.
Coffee's getting lukewarm.
Fast forward.
Horns blaring though no one can move.
Hold on . . . rewind.
"Three to five inches of pure winter mix!"
No . . . before that, rewind.
" . . . found stabbed to death last night . . ."
Play.
No . . . Couldn't be —
Click.

Amy Thompson

A Watery Grave

The wind howled as it ripped through the trees, tearing the leaves off and throwing them into the water. A ring of ripples formed around each one and spread out farther. The leaves were everywhere, blown around as if they would swallow him up at any moment, covering the ground nearby, along with the evidence. Still wet from a storm, they smacked against his bare skin, chilling him. He tried to wipe away the cold, clammy feeling with his hand, but even with the leaves gone, it would not go away; he could still feel her hand against him.

He decided to ignore the leaves and looked in front of him. But there was no longer anything there but a dark, black void, a large, cold eye that watched him, knowing everything that occurred, swallowing his secrets.

Megan Mianulli

Bittersweet

The sweet smell of decay
Swirls through this house.
Love lies in the corner
battered beyond recognition
. . . almost

Sifting through the debris
a small shard bites my palm.
I place it in my pocket
lick the blood off
slip quietly away–
keep walking, keep walking
the taste of blood and freedom bitter.
I spit you out once, twice.
The shard slices with every step.

R. Niven Armentrout

Damn Science

The wind rolls past your sweaty body as you run your five-mile course through Gunpowder State Park. Suddenly you feel a cold chill on your skin and remember your "Earth and Field" science class. The teacher had rambled something about the difference in temperatures of water and the earth and something else about latent heat, but all you remember is how cold it was in the classroom, almost like how cold you are now.

You try to focus on anything else because your chest is throbbing with pain. "Damn Cigarettes!" you think as you wheeze breath into your lungs. "I wouldn't have started smoking if I knew they would do this to me," you say satirically to yourself. "They should put a warning label on these cancer sticks. 'Caution: may make you feel like a piece of shit during physical activities.'" You chuckle to yourself, as you almost fall over from lack of oxygen. Catch yourself and move on soldier, only two more miles to go.

Sun rays cut through your eyes like daggers. It's about 6 o'clock; the sun is getting lower in the sky, almost eye level, and you can't even see five feet in front of you because of the glare. You remember science class again. After the autumnal equinox the days are shorter and sunset comes sooner. "Damn it, stupid science," plaguing you like Black Death, Ebola, and Anthrax all combined. Everywhere you go you think about it, how thermals cause wind which causes rain which leads to snow, or long shore currents and how they affect the tides, or the way rocks are formed: Intrusive, Extrusive, Sedimentary, Metamorphic, and what's the other one? "FUCK! I don't remember...Damn Science."

Finally you fall over, science wins. You remember that drinking causing dehydration, which makes it hard for your body to operate, "And I'm spent," you think as you lie in the leaves. "At least it's a nice view of the stars..."

Carly Halfter

6

Freedom

Swallowing the water—
he swims and stares at me.
I watch him cruise in
hundreds of circles
around his oceanic habitat.
He explores the same certain crevices in the gravel
burrowing his mouth,
convinced he'd found a new home.
Flippering to the top of the ocean,
his fins dance in flickering waves
back and forth
like salsa dance motions.

Then—
he holds still,
as if he knows of his imprisonment.
He looks at me
and I think . . .
Why have I trapped you
forcing you to understand only the edges of your bowl,
when there is an endless ocean
to discover, explore, and learn the truth
of freedom.

Justin Fairley

A Query For Robert Browning

Just suppose, dear Robert,
I were to tell the truth of me.
Lives would change, but would the tides?
Would the moon spiral out of orbit,
The snail fall off his perch, or god?
Would all the poets and lovers
end their long sleep or the lark cease her song?
Could my truth matter so much, dear Robert?
so little?
at all?

R. Niven Armentrout

Upon Reading Leaves of Grass

"Be not too certain but I am with you"
Walt Whitman

I have fallen in love with a prophet
of silver beard and words
that dart across the century
and pierce with accurate emotion;
a "subtle electric fire"
the grave cannot contain.

Would that I could frequent Phaff's
to quench my thirst for you,
but I shall have to be content to place lilacs on a soldier's field
while embracing your words
Oh! Your words!

R. Niven Armentrout

Flower Bud

Kym Kunaniec

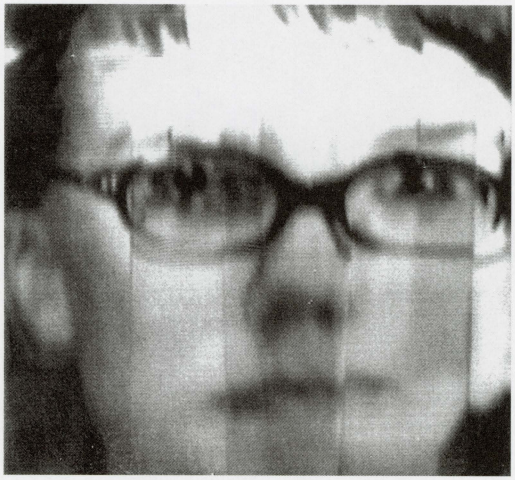
Points

Kym Kunaniec

A Delightful Pineapple

Matt Connelly

Waltz with Minced Meat



Matt Connelly

ADHD

My brain is a web site
with a million links,
with a million links,
with a million links.
I click three times
but can't find my way home
Only one option is open—
shut down.

R. Niven Armentrout

Tradition

I want to write my death
upon a golden cloud shaped like superman,
across a phosphorescent sky that never sets:

plumes of silver ink and
glitter wrapped around
a halo of short good-byes and muddled paper.

I want to write my death and watch it
fly heroically through azure
scream between the lightning and thunder of midnight.

And while time descends upon light sleepers
across late night television screens and energy
shaped like electricity,

I will whittle the impossibilities away,
glide astride history
hollering for a slower future, a faster past.

I will add my death to the clouds of electricity
and become gold with short good-byes.

Ann Sosnowski

Incarcerated

The man in the cell next to mine is still screaming and cursing. He's been doing this for about 40 minutes, and if he does it long enough, he'll either lose his voice, or get roughed up by the guards. Someone snaps and loses it almost every night.

The noise has become like the sound of crickets once was, when I was a boy, on camping trips with my dad. He was the busiest man I've ever known, but he never missed a chance to take me camping. We would build a fire and he would tell me about when his dad used to take him camping. And I think, I'll never be able to take my son camping. He's probably calling some other man "Daddy" already.

So now, instead of the crickets, the yells from the other prisoners surround me at night. If I close my eyes and start to think hard enough about anything, if I try to remember an old episode of "Gilligan's Island," or if I think about how big outer space is, then I can forget about the screaming idiots for a few minutes. But there is really only so much thinking you can do. Most of the time I think about what I could have done differently, so I wouldn't end up here. You pay for your mistakes. If you make the same mistakes enough, you'll learn the hard way. Now, I'll never teach my son how to drive. I'll never give him "the talk" before his senior prom. He'll resent me for never being there.

More prisoners join in the yelling. I climb into my bunk and stare up at the scrawled writing on the bunk above mine. The expletive-laden message board offers a few crude suggestions, but not a single letter of hope. I pull my sheets over my head, close my eyes, and imagine that I'm in a tent, next to a fading fire.

Will Rode

wallpaper

lying still i notice
yellow patterns
and pink lines
zigzagging across the wall
i run my hand
following the yellow
to the left
and the pink to the right
unlocking the story it contains

the wallpaper
it is alive
glued still
watching every move
every whisper and
every painful emotion
sharing my insanity

shhhhh
it's speaking
my hand follows
the rough sandpaper
down to a corner in the wall
it's peeling
escaping the asylum
the misery and pain
and grief and insanity
i must stop it
it's the only thing that understands me

staring upwards from the corner
the yellow patterns
and pink lines
torment me
zigzagging across the wall
watching the escaping path
lying still i notice
how the wallpaper has outsmarted us all

Justin Fairley

Mad Man

I sleep next to a mad man

between us lay silent humors

and an isonomia of insomnia
wet and dripping

between the hairs we glance through to see

and the earth becomes us motionless
and the air turns our skin to odorous maize
and the fire coughs within our loins
too much remains insane

and this diet of wet kisses and futile poses

this activity of turning and pulsing and whipping around
of moans and tomorrows and the final expiation

imbalances us

and this cold bath can not rid this fever

this hellabore potent by bundling
can not rid me of this mad man i sleep against

the one with silent humors rising and ebbing
and tiding and waning and waxing

waiting for the tide to turn within the sheets.

Ann Sosnowski

Why Boys Don't Call

The body of plastic morphs into one of sinister scaliness:
The epitome of horror.
Toxic venom oozes its way up through the curly cord with lethal
ease—
Injection would bring instant death.
The tiny numbered keys, once so harmless, become gleaming sabers,
Capable of slicing an unsuspecting
fingertip—
The idea of such gore is unbearable. . .
And that, ladies, is
Why boys don't call.

Justine Trainor

Soup du Jour

On the menu,
the soup du jour starts with
a base of anxiety,
then adds a hint of morning rush hour
and a dab of worries about being late for class.

It's flavored with
a careful eye,
studying and stirring in material
on the next exam.

We've sprinkled in a little bit of
headache,
intermixing some relationship problems,
adding just a taste of stress.

To add some spice,
we didn't forget to add in those overtime hours
you're working this evening.

And,
for extra zest, (use at your own risk)
there is some Tylenol served on the side.
Bon appétit!

Justin Fairley

Lunar Lady

I am female
tied to the moon
my love waxes and wanes
confusing us both
not knowing when
waves of passion
will crash over me
suck me under
then pull away
leaving an empty shell
endless cycle

R. Niven Armentrout

9/7/2002

Something about the way the light shines here
    makes it magical.
It seems to welcome the laughter of the families
a little piece of perfection,
    like a painting.
A gentle breeze brushes the hair
off the back of my neck;
it almost feels like your hand,
    gently touching my skin
    back when you used to love me.
The emotions I feel when I'm here
    encompass me,
swallow me whole.
    I'm swimming in the feeling.
The air, sweet like candy.
I want to capture it all in my lens
    and keep it forever,
but pictures aren't the same
so I'll fill my lungs with air
and keep it in my heart
    on a shelf, next to you.
And I'll remember the feel of it,
like your hands creeping around my waist,
    and the realization that it was
        only the wind
    pressing my shirt up against my skin
        in the
            dark

Tali Mindek

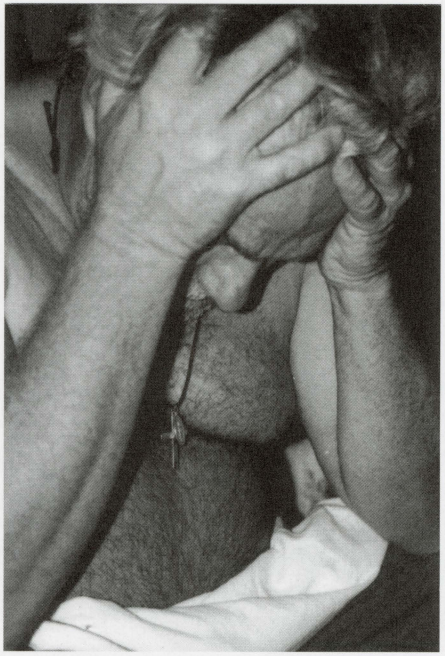
Home

Tara Cofiell

Elephant Ear

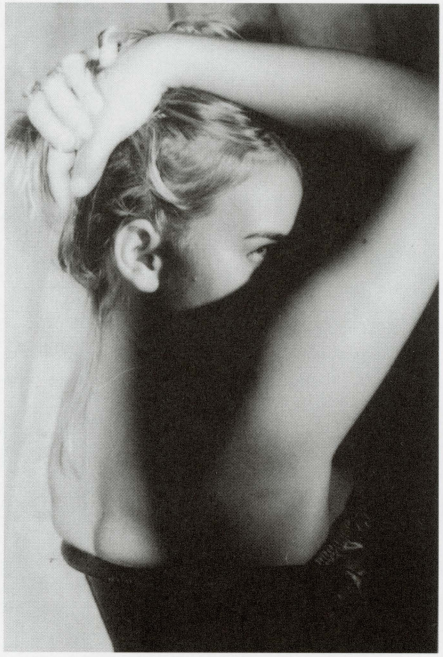
Tara Cofiell

Jack



Tara Cofiell

Laura Lee



Tara Cofiell

Yoko knows

1
The Japanese footbridge is clear;
Monet's dream, no longer dream.
So sudden is passion, but true love never lasts,
As even gravel swims in the water below.
Empty faces stare and reflect into the pool and disappear;
Butterflies dissolve in the shade.

2
Lonely words lie like forgotten old letters
As reluctant sighs escape our souls.
Stuffed inside the pocket, folded in an envelope:
A single to Manchester and my ticket home.

3
Breathing settles into rhythm steady and
A warm colour with deep pink bloom is flushed in the slanted sky.
Tears have no colour and
There is no language for goodbye.

Kevin Wisniewski

Unwanted Incidents

My past awakens me
with startling shudders
sending tremors of fear
down my spine
reminding me of unwanted incidents
that plague my mind
and rid it
of all its sincerity.
The frightening answers of silence,
which forever echo
in the hollows of all my insecurities,
are big enough
to swallow me whole.

Laurie Dudek

Annie

Whenever it snows, I see her. With the snowflakes falling gently, slowly, quietly, all around her. She is dancing in circles, surrounded by the dropping shards of sky. Everything is white. The sky is one giant, colorless cloud, and the once-vibrant grass is hidden under a sea of frozen water droplets. Her pure, milky skin blends in with the backdrop. Her eyes, great blue circles the color of the deepest sapphires, shine out like a beacon of life through the blizzard of silent colorlessness. Long, black eyelashes curl upward away from those eyes, providing a resting place for the wayward snowflakes. Annie in the snow.

Suddenly, I am brought back. I stare into the picture frame. Annie is standing atop a mountain in the Alps. She has her arms open as wide as her cumbersome skiing attire will allow. She is a symbol of everything wonderful and pure about life. Annie on top of the world.

Then there is a new face in the frame. I see my own eyes reflecting back at me from the glass. I put down the picture and try to come to terms with where I am and where Annie is. My family is all around me in a room that can only house tears. It is not snowing and Annie is no longer able to dance and live and be young and free on a snowy day. A young man driving too fast in his car has taken care of that. She died instantly. Only fourteen years old. I never got to say goodbye. I see her now only in my memories. I see her whenever it snows.

Nicole Morales

Some say I think too much

Goodbye to friends I've never met
and people I see everyday without a
single smile on this face
that I wear from time to time.
I can't sleep with this regret.
Before it ends,
may I mend
the torn sheet
that covers this lifelessness?

What does it mean to live?
Trembling hands on the road of desire.
Stumbling towards death through the lips
of a lonely heart.
The blood seeps through
the pores of infatuation's shell.
When dreams fade into reality,
The truth of this life is
wrenched from its forbidden place.

Age is undeniable,
Yet inconsequential.
Life lived as years,
Falling as though they were raindrops in a puddle
by the side of the road.
Until, splashed.

Gave it all away
for this wish to drown in the river.
Shadowless bone is
wasted away again.
Sacrificing mind for that which matters most.
Being a distance from reality.
Truly wasted in anonymity.

Eric Thanner

Heated

A flickering of soul runs and re-runs
Traversing sky, dancing on cloud.

Her existence alone paints light in the atmosphere
And fills the world's warm belly.

Eyes flash and I tremble. She is beautiful and she is clear.
I marvel at her radiance.
I slip and I stare
And need not strain for identity any longer.

Desire,
Like a wave, like the rain, like the sun on a mid-winter's day:
To intimately know her dark spaces
And delicate shades of expression.
To know from which long, grey, oscillating corridor she came.
Curiosity and mystery compliment each other.

To dream like this was worth the trouble getting here.

To meet but for an instant.
No words, but her audible eyes stir my wounded soul.
One moment that she acknowledges my being.
One connection and I am heated forever.

Kevin Wisniewski

Tears

Can you taste the saline
in these words?
They are the tears
I can no longer cry
having choked them back
for so long they now course
through my veins
mingle with my blood
and drip from my fingers
poems

R. Niven Armentrout

Have a Nice Life

"Have a nice life."

That's the last thing she said to me. Well, I think. I really don't remember much after that. I walked into the library after I had finished my last final, looking for someone, but not her. I saw her standing there, talking to Amy. At first, I didn't know if I wanted to talk to her. I hoped she didn't see me. We had only gone out once in the past year after having an on-again, off-again thing my whole sophomore year. We really never were a couple, but we had all the problems that ex-couples have. When she spotted me, I figured I had to at least go talk to her.

22

I wasn't drunk at all. Not like the last time I saw her a few weeks before. Somehow, we managed to spend an entire evening at my fraternity's spring party without pissing each other off. That hadn't happened in a long time. But we spent the whole night together—her in that pink jumper she wore that drove me crazy for some reason – and had a blast. I held out hope that maybe that would lead to one more chance at a real relationship, but she never returned my phone calls, and we somehow never ran into each other on campus.

Which sucked because that whole date came about as I wandered the campus, ready to ask out the first person I ran into. I never thought I'd have one last fling with her. After an afternoon of drinking on the golf course, I needed to find a date for the evening festivities. I didn't want to know what the guys would do to me if I showed up at the only guy-girl function without a date, so I just went in search of someone who wanted to have fun and drink for free.

Christy fit the bill. I didn't even see her across the street. But she yelled two or three times until I finally heard her. She denied that she was fishing for a date, but I never believed her. She always had a way of making sure I noticed her when she needed company. And she always seemed to show up at our parties with someone.

In the library, I knew I had no way out when Amy pointed in my direction. I had to go talk to them. In different circumstances, I could get away with a nod or a wave. But I knew Amy just wanted to see what would happen.

I walked toward them and tried to wish my sobriety away. As much drinking as I had done with the guys that final semester of my junior year, I had to have some extra alcohol in my system somewhere. Why didn't I have a hollow bone or something to save up for emergencies like this?

"Hey, what's up," I said, failing for the 363rd time to act nonchalant around Christy. The problem with relationships that begin with a drunken kiss is that you never find a way to get over that initial awkwardness. I had talked with Christy dozens of times before she cornered me at the beach party two years before. But as she pulled the beach ball

out of my hands with one hand and put the other on the back of my neck, I lost the capability to converse casually with her.

"You done?" I still have no idea why Amy felt the need to set me up. She had the same final I did just 15 minutes before. But out of all the girls Christy lived with, Amy wanted to see us together the least. And she'd like nothing more than to orchestrate an awkward goodbye the day before Christy graduated.

"You were in the classroom, too, Amy. Remember?" I never really liked her.

"Well, that was nice," Christy said.

"I didn't walk out in the middle. Yeah, I'm done. How about you guys?"

Christy didn't deserve that kind of set up. I knew she had finished earlier that morning. Despite the way she pulled me in and out of her universe, I made sure to find out pretty much everything she did. I didn't stalk her like that idiot Kevin, but I paid attention. I asked the right questions of the right people. Because I knew that kiss in the basement of my fraternity house was no accident, no random occurrence. I had to keep thinking that or the dream I had chased for the last two years of college would die, proving that I had wasted precious energy trying to flatter her when I could have been drinking.

"Finished this morning. I'm heading home later today."

"Got any plans for the summer?" Another question I knew the answer to. And Amy knew that.

"I thought Jen told you what Christy is doing?"

"Maybe she did. I don't hang on every detail of Christy's life now, do I, Amy?"

"That's something only you would know."

Things couldn't get much worse. I had set myself up to hear a goodbye from the girl I wanted. She would tell me she would head to England to spend the summer with her sister before going to law school across the country in the fall. If I hadn't come into the library to look for Pear, this never would have happened. That bastard owed me $40 for typing a paper, and I wanted to get it off him to get a head start drinking. I knew he had one more final, so I wanted to grab him before that. I should have made him pay up when I finished the paper.

If I had done that, I would have been perched on a bar stool at the Elbow Room, drinking dollar drafts with a few other guys. My last memory of Christy would have been a hurried kiss at the door and the door slowly closing as she whispered goodbye early that morning a few weeks ago. We took extra precaution to make sure we didn't wake up any of the other girls—and their boyfriends—in the house even though most of them were at the party the night before. The ones who weren't undoubtedly got the news of my

presence. God forbid anything stay secret among those girls.

But Christy always wanted to keep things between us secret. Even though 50-some people saw us making out that night and a good dozen or so saw us leave together, she wanted to pretend we never spent the night together. She hustled me out the door almost embarrassed that we'd hooked up yet again. Still, I could live with that last memory. Because even though she tried to get rid of me so quickly after we woke up that morning, neither of us knew we would not see each other again.

24

That is until I walked in the library. And headed over to talk to Christy and Amy. And opened my big mouth. Until then, I had no problem leaving things the way they were. I don't think she did either.

"Well, I'm going to go ahead and find Pear. He owes me some cash."

"Type another paper for him?"

"Yeah. Ten pages. Forty bucks. He was desperate as usual."

"That ought to come in handy."

"Damn straight. Well, you have a good trip. And good luck in law school, you know?"

"Yeah, thanks."

"All right. I guess I'll see you."

"Yeah, I guess."

We hugged. A hug I hoped would lead to a kiss or some kind of pithy comment about how we would keep in touch or what I meant to her in the grand scheme of things. But I felt in an instant that this was the same hug she gave to every guy that she was saying goodbye to. This was a friend's hug. As I stepped back, I realized that I could deal with that. Christy and I were friends before we kissed and we managed to stay friendly over the past year. I could handle the whole friend thing.

But then she said it. What the hell possessed her? Where does something like that come from?

You say that to someone you intend on never seeing again. You say that to someone who you don't want to see turn out successful.

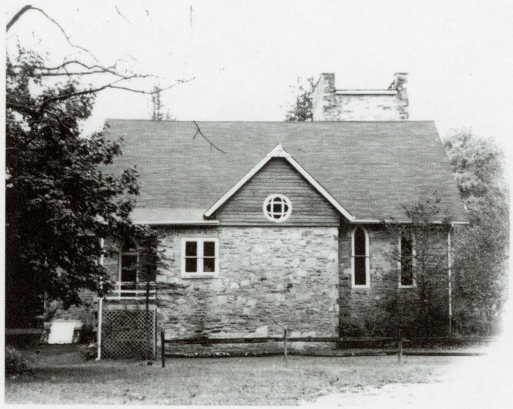
"Have a nice life."

I reeled. I walked away in silence, wanting to shake my head in amazement, but knowing that sort of thing would only give her the satisfaction.

Then I knew she said the right thing. I didn't have to worry about living up to that kiss. I was going to have a nice life.

Brian Shea

Church



Claire Mullineaux

Plant

Claire Mullineaux

Reminiscing

The first time I met you
My eyes sped past yours.
Who were you but a stranger,
An enigma of the male species?

Yet, once we talked
I knew I was looking at my reflection—
Someone who knew which book I was about to read
As that was the one he started only hours before. . .

At that instant
You became my today and tomorrow;
A tomorrow that never materialized.
A future obscured by your —*sque* nature:

The peculiarity of your manners,
Which I first so adored,
Brought about the end
To all of this fuckwittage.

Floria Volynskaya

Adhering Dance Floor

Rhythmic sounds escape
blasting vibrations
and energy in spiral motions.
Flashing and fluorescent lights
create a glistening glow.
Lights brighten the notorious nights,
illuminating erotic wave motions
only understood by internal rhythms,
yet visible to external hop, skip and boogie down.
It embodies its emblazed tiles
with multiple glazing shirts and shoes
using its hypnotic-paced powers.
The night beats on
pulsing those familiar emotions—exotic and energetic.
Eventually,
the scene becomes vacant.
Stillness occurs until the next night
when it could be you
bowing down to the adhering dance floor.

Justin Fairley

Rate Your Life

There was a guy sitting on the street.
Do you remember when you walked right past?
Did a thought ever cross your mind?
How lucky you are you're not sitting on your ass
Or begging for money on the next street corner?
How happy you should be
That you've got what you've got?

Rate your life
One to ten
Tally them up
Vote again
Do you like
What you see?
It's not too late
To wanna be
Something better than—
Raise it up to ten.
Are you having fun?
Would you do it again?

Your buddy just bought a million dollar house
And spent half a mil on the inside
With his four quarter-million-dollar cars
Parked in each slot of his four car garage.
Does the envy just eat you alive?
Sometimes you just have to realize
What you've got is all you need
And more than you need to be happy.

Now, from up above you see this couple
Walking down the street
With two kids inside a stroller.
They hop into the Toyota and drive off.
But just then you wake up
And see yourself in the mirror.
Do you think they had a good life?
Or do you already know?

Matthew Price

28

Trading Places

For twenty-six years the mother watched and waited. On the bed next to her lay her daughter. For twenty-six years the daughter lay motionless and silent, except for the sound of gentle breathing. Did she dream? Only God knows. Did she hear her mother above her, or feel her touch? The mother believed so. The mother believed the daughter understood every word spoken to her. And she had proof—the daughter would squeeze her hand. This was the daughter's sign. So believed the mother. The doctors believed differently. "Permanently comatose," they would say; "persistent vegetative state," they would say. The squeeze of her hand was merely a reflex, they would say. But what did they know? The doctors had not fed and clothed the baby. They had not waved after the little girl leaving for her first day of school. They had not shared in the laughter and the presents and the games at the birthday parties. How the daughter had loved the birthday parties! The doctors had not arrived until just after the last party—her sixteenth—which is when the sickness came. The doctors only knew the daughter as sick. What could they know?

The illness had been short. Looking back, after all these years, it happened in an instant. It was like an accident, which happens all at once, though in fact it was several months before the daughter closed her eyes for the last time. "Mommy, you'll never leave me, will you? You'll stay with me until I get well?" Those were the last words she spoke. And the mother made a promise, "I sure will baby, I've never left you before." Since then, the mother has watched and waited in the stillness of their home. For the first six years, she had the company of her husband. They had cared for the daughter as one. They thought alike, and felt alike. Then her husband died; that was a long time ago. Now she cares for the daughter alone. She feeds her through the tube in her stomach, and gives her drink. She speaks to her and reads to her. She strokes her hair and holds her hand. And always, always the mother smiles.

And to think that they ask, "Is this not a burden?" What kind of burden is it that fills your life with purpose and meaning, that makes the years fly by, that has become a source

of utter comfort? And then there are those who suggest the unthinkable to let the daughter go, to a better place, they say. A better place? The daughter's place is with the mother, and the mother's place is with her; isn't that obvious? But nothing irritated the mother more than the outright loss of hope in those around her. For the mother knew the daughter would wake up. She knew that as well as you and I know the sky is blue, or that grass is green.

For twenty-six years the mother sits over the daughter. They form a quiet permanence amidst a sea of change. Fashions change. Presidents change. Some years the country is at war, some years it is at peace. The seasons come and go like the ticks of a clock. But the daughter lies in the same bed, and the mother sits in the same chair, and the daily rituals all remain the same.

And so a sense of timelessness envelops the two. But timelessness is a false perception. In attending so thoroughly to the daughter the mother forgets the time passing over herself. The constant smile has etched deep groves in her face. She has become shorter, thinner. Slow and silent changes have taken place inside the body as well. Vessels which were once pliant have become fragile. Her body has become a sort of machine, which knows only one purpose. But all machines become brittle and subject to breakdown. This is especially likely to happen if they are subject to some new stress. In the case at hand, the stress takes the form of some news that the machine is incapable of handling.

One day, the daughter wakes. She opens her eyes. She turns to the mother. She tries to speak, but cannot. She tries to reach out to the mother. Her limbs can make only feeble movements. But she is aware. She recognizes the mother. She begins to perceive what has brought them to this place. As we all do when waking from sleep, she quickly begins to separate reality from illusion. It is a faculty built into each of us. She quickly

begins to reconstruct her own history, and at the same time senses that it is a matter of urgency. All irrelevant memories are ignored; the essentials of the present situation become the focus of her awakening consciousness.

The mother sees all of this; she understands what is taking place—she knows the daughter. She feels the joy swelling within herself. She squeezes her daughter's hands, and smiles more intently than ever before. It is as if the past twenty-six years of smiling had been practice for this one, consummate smile.

But no sooner does the mother's joy reach its peak than there intrudes an awareness coming from a different direction—from her physical self. The mother had become a watcher, and her body had adapted accordingly. Now it is being called upon to act on a new emotion, to adapt to a new reality. As much as she wants to accept it, her body cannot. An intense pain shoots through her head. The machine collapses; the mother falls. And as the mother falls, the daughter rises.

It is one year later. The mother lies in bed. She is quiet, motionless, except for the sound of gentle breathing. The daughter sits where the mother once did, patiently watching,patiently waiting. The daughter presses the mother's hand; she strokes her hair. She feeds her and reads to her. The doctors say the mother will never wake. Their words mean nothing to the daughter. The daughter is not sad; she is happy.

For there had been that moment a year ago when the daughter suddenly caught realization of the situation, and the mother had seen this in her eyes. For an instant, each of them grasped the entire truth—of what had come before, of what was happening then, and of what was to be—a trading of places. And each knew that the other knew. In that briefest moment, and without words, the private experiences of twenty-six years were exchanged. In that instant, they had enjoyed a perfect intimacy, and in their own way, a perfect love.

Alan Penczek

Waiting

Waiting for that thrill in life
the orgasm that makes me bleed
screaming for an awakening
of cold flesh touching my shoulders
coarse fingertips walking across my body
seeking a purpose
    for walks in the cold rain
    for unfinished dinners
    and the static on the TV
looking for a meaning
    in the ashtray
        full of cigarettes
    for the song that plays again
    for my empty gas tank
trying to find love
    in unwritten words
    and blank sheets of paper
    in waiting for the ATM
trying to untangle string
and meaningless thoughts
weaving straw into gold
    and melting gold into silver
standing in the yard
    kissing frogs into men
    and watching them walk away from me
into the fog
as I light another
    and burn it all away

Tali Mindek

ENIGMA

At first, the pieces fit,
The outside, straight ones,
No mystery there!

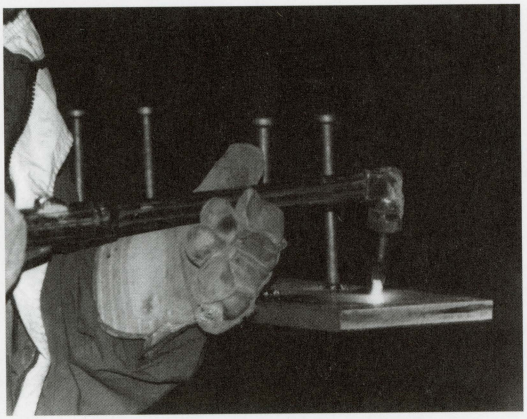
The Curved ones took some doing,
Each one unto itself.

I turn them slowly over,
Smooth, fine pieces in my hand.

The gaps that I see now,
I cannot find,
Suspecting you hold them in your pocket,
Playing games.

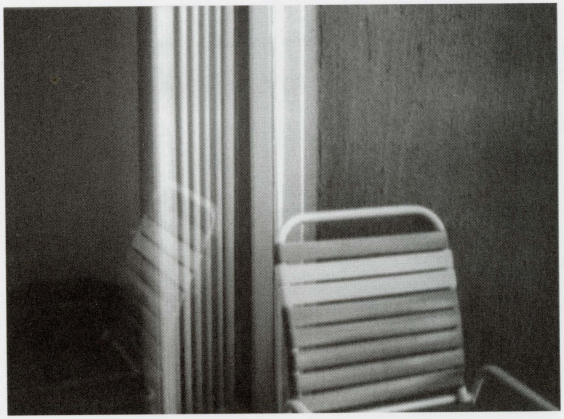
Suzanne Lesley

Machinery



Rachel Lewis

Lounging

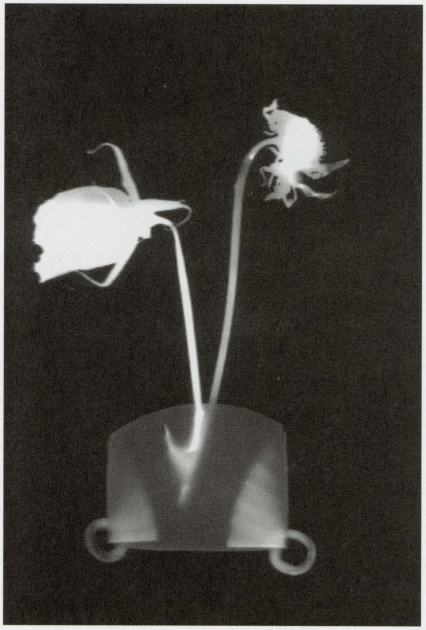


Lindy Cody

Bush

Kisha Belton

Flowers



Heather Laziuk

Siena

34

I am flushed with anticipation and excitement as the folding doors of the small, orange bus open. I step on quickly to ensure that one of the few seats left is mine. I push through the herd of eager passengers and take my seat behind the dark-haired bus driver. His eyebrows lift over his sleek brown-tinted sunglasses as he watches the people squeeze onto the rapidly crowding bus. The doors struggle to close as the last passenger boards.

Slowly, the bus begins to drive up a steep hill. I move my head closer to the window to avoid the elbows of the standing passengers. As I look out the window at the impressive Tuscan landscape, I forget about the discomfort on the bus. The sky is as blue as the Mediterranean Sea, which just hours earlier I had flown over. In the distance, I can see a city that stands by itself in the middle of grassy hills that roll like waves. Two towers, one medieval and one gothic, hover over the quaint city of Siena, competing for recognition. They are so tall they block the sun. Cypress trees, aligned in rows like proud soldiers, seem to line the path that leads to this enchanted city.

"Ouch," I think as I move my foot from under that of a tall blond woman who stands inches away from me.

"I'm sorry," she exclaims. I nod in forgiveness, without even turning my head from the window.

As the bus stops to let on more passengers, I look across the narrow street at a house on the corner. It is bright orange and stands about three stories high. The red shingles on the roof compliment the green shutters perfectly. Baskets of red, purple, and pink flowers adorn the low window sills. Looking around, I see that most of the buildings in Siena are similar, with variations in width, height, and facade color. The consistent red brick shingles unify the variations.

People–young and old, male and female—speed past us on colorful mopeds, their helmets playfully decorated with bold stickers and vibrant paint. I can feel the bus switch gears as it struggles to climb the winding, uphill road. A medieval wall of red brick, which once served as protection for the province, parallels the twisting road on one side. Still standing after centuries of wear, the wall is randomly covered with vines of blooming

crimson flowers and luscious green leaves. On the other side of the road lies a valley between the hill we are driving on and the hill Siena rests upon. Masses of bright red poppies add brilliant color to the green and beige grass of the valley.

Bodies crush me against the hot bus window as we make a sharp turn into the vaulted stone gates of the city. Like the doors of the little shops, windows are opened wide, welcoming the fresh air and the afternoon sun. Side by side little shops, selling everything from hand-painted ceramics to Pinocchio dolls, welcome the tourists and locals alike. Around every corner gelato shops sit, advertising the popular Italian dessert. Groups of Sienese people walk along the sides of the narrow stone-paved roads, inches from the few passing Smart cars and mopeds. The older men are dressed in nice shirts and pressed slacks while the younger men are more casual in tight fitting T-shirts and snug jeans. Nearly all the women are dressed in frilly skirts or dresses and platform sandals.

As the bus quickly but cautiously drives through the streets, I am surprised. With every passing alley, I catch glimpses of what lies behind the buildings: ornate basilicas and highly detailed statues of patron saints and contrada mascots. Soft gray smoke rises from the brick chimneys of far-off villas. Beneath the smell of perspiration on the bus, I can almost smell the wood burning. A centuries-old medieval fortress stands in solitude on the horizon. Its modest tower is all that can be seen through the thick, green shrubbery and tall umbrella trees.

The bus stops a block away from Siena's heart at the Piazza del Campo. The irritated passengers pour out of the congested bus in relief. Upon my eager exit I look down the dim, slender alley that leads to the Campo. Torre de Mangia, the taller of the two towers that I saw earlier from a distance, casts its powerful shadow onto the auburn bricks of the fan-shaped center of Siena. I take in a deep breath of sweet Sienese air as I stroll down the softly lit gray-stone path towards the sunlit center. As I walk, it settles in my mind that this is where I will be spending the next five weeks.

Shannon Smith

Red Balloon

Clasping it I was . . . loosely
As I reached for the stars—with an extending arm.
It reminded me of my childhood—lost in time and space
Nevermore to see.
As I remember it being so bright
Though it was only last night
That I released my red balloon.
I'm sorry I let it go so soon.

Antoine Silva

Red Balloon

Bouncing in rubber
On a white string I Flubber.
Flubber Flubber.
Blubber.
Little hand—a toddler
Tugging me. I'm Rubber.

Red Balloon
In my hand
Bouncing as to my plans
For Red to come to near no harm.
Flubber.
Flubber Blubber.
Flubber Blubber.

Mikey is such a smiling tot
Gaily grinning
Crying not.
Letting Rubber
Fill him up. Flubber
Flubber Blubber.
Flubber Blubber.

Balloon and boy and little man
Travel each their only plan
To try their best to stay
with one another.
Flubber.
Flubber Blubber.
Flubber Blubber.

Joel Griffith

Letter to a Former Friend

I live in the ruins of a forgotten world, walking as a mere shadow in the footsteps of the elders. Their great achievements and relics have become as frail to the touch as our bodies to the sword. Before our age, when the gods roamed the earth and sky, they constructed huge stone temples; these grand halls, crafted to perfect smoothness, now lie as elaborate memorials, inlaid with furze and ivy. Here, I have been discarded. Beaten and bereaved, every part of me has been slain. Nothing but an outlawed name and a broken sword remain of the man you once led.

It is in the midst of this old world that I am reborn. It is here, among hundreds of stone monuments, that my mind comes to peace, and my decision is made final. Here, with my back against this thin, jagged slab of rock, inscribed with ancient glyphs, that my sword takes to my hand. It is this stone library from which the dead has returned. Hear the cry of this specter: I will reclaim the country that claimed the life of my son; I will be but the first gust of a mighty torrent, and this gale, my old friend, will consume you.

The substance of the way of the samurai lies in death.
One should act though he were already dead,
That faced with his own death, he would still do what must be done.

Paramount among the principles of the art of war
Is this: that one should lay down his life and strike with his sword.

The twelfth day of the fifth month, 132.
Yamamato Jin'emon

Ian Schroen

38

I used to be a poet

I used to be a poet.
I used to think I had problems.
Now I know I just have a life.

My parents, still married but alone,
split the emotional bond when I was eight.
It was subliminal,
coffee crawling down the wall and glass
melting into carpet.

I used to be a poet.
Now I have a therapist.

I fell in love with the wrong guy at the wrong time
in the right suburb in a left-handed sort of way.
It was uncomfortable and unnatural.

Sex was crunchy, his fingers like I was rolling on acorns
in the back seat of his high performance vehicle.
Post-relationship sex where he was doing it with
everyone right except me.

I, too, used to be a poet.
Now, I have contraception.

I used to sit in and listen
to Bohemians with their black shirts and scuffed shoes,
their poor experiments and inventions of the mundane.
I slept late sometimes and showed up in my pajamas.

I used to be a poet.
Now I have a college degree.

Four years in Boston, a phone call, my father swimming in Vodka and vomit
my mother somber, writing out compliment cards for restaurants and retail stores,
until there were no others beside her to compliment.

I used to be a poet.
Now I tend two gravestones in Baltimore four times a year.

I married a man with tattoos, an affinity for dance music and saving money
and I spent it all just to try to get published.
Long nights of sex and take-out turned into long nights at the office.

I, too, used to be a poet.
Now I color-code closets and cry with the water on in the bathroom.

I got another degree in creative writing, took up interior design,
buried two dogs, an aunt, and a lobster during the slow season.
I gave up jewelry and hair dye for jeans and a T-shirt and I sip cold beer
while watching the full moon complete its ascent.

I used to be a poet.
I used to think I had problems.
Now I just know I have a life.

Ann Sosnowski

2003 Prize Winners

Poetry: **Upon Reading Leaves of Grass** *R. Niven Armentrout*
Prose: **Incarcerated** *Will Rode*
Artwork: **Points** *Kym Kunaniec*

PRIZES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2003 Spectrum Staff

Editors:
Ann Sosnowski
Floria Volynskaya
Amy Thompson
Rosemarie Armentrout
Joel Griffith
De'Anne Roye
Zainab Moody

Advisor: Dr. Carol Sapora

Design and Production:
Elizabeth Pietro
Zach Steeg
Carla McCollums

Advisor: Lori Rubeling

Spectrum is supported by funding from Villa Julie's English Department.
© Villa Julie College, Spring 2003

VILLA JULIE
COLLEGE
Imagine your future. Design your career.®